



Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta  
Parochial District of  
Wangaratta West & The Warbys

**The Second Sunday before Advent {OS 33}**

Ante Communion, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2023, 11.00am

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

Processional Hymn—TiS 642. tune, Bunessan

1. **This day God gives me strength of high heaven,  
sun and moon shining, flame in my hearth,  
flashing of lightning, wind in its swiftness,  
deeps of the ocean, firmness of earth.**
2. **This day God sends me strength to sustain me,  
might to uphold me, wisdom as guide.  
Your eyes are watchful, your ears are listening,  
your lips are speaking, friend at my side.**
3. **God's way is my way, God's shield is round me,  
God's host defends me, saving from ill.  
Angels of heaven, drive from me always  
all that would harm me, stand by me still.**
4. **Rising, I thank you, mighty and strong One,  
king of creation, giver of rest,  
firmly confessing threeness of persons,  
oneness of Godhead, trinity blest.**

James Quinn 1919– alt.  
adapted from 'St Patrick's Breastplate'  
Words by permission Cassell plc, London

*Welcome & Greeting*

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

**His steadfast love endures for ever!**

*The minister greets the people, .*

Grace and peace be with you  
**and also with you.**

*The people may greet one another with a sign of peace.*

### *Sentence*

God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other.

1 Thessalonians 5.9, 11

### *Prayer of Preparation*

Come and worship the holy and glorious Trinity, as we pray together:

**God of the feast,  
your Wisdom calls us, your Word teaches us  
and your love feeds us here.  
Give us grace to welcome one another  
as you have welcomed us in Christ Jesus,  
in whose name we pray. Amen.**

### *The Two Great Commandments*

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

### *Introduction to The Confession and Absolution*

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life.

### *Time for reflection and preparation*

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you;  
we have done evil in your sight.  
We are sorry and repent.  
Have mercy on us according to your love.  
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.  
Renew a right spirit within us  
and restore us to the joy of your salvation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### *The minister stands and declares God's forgiveness*

God desires that none should perish,  
but that all should turn to Christ, and live.  
In response to his call we acknowledge our sins.  
God pardons those who humbly repent, and truly believe the gospel.  
Therefore we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*Hymn of Praise (Gloria in excelsis). tune, The Ashgrove*

1. **To God be the glory, all glory in the highest  
and peace to his people who dwell here below,  
Our heav'nly Father, our Lord, and our sov'reign,  
to you, the Almighty, our praises bestow.  
We worship and adore you, we bow here before you  
with grateful thanksgiving, our song let us raise.  
All glory and honour and glad adoration  
to God in the highest, hosanna and praise.**
2. **Lord Jesus, the only begotten of the Father  
we praise and we bless you, the Son and the Lamb.  
The sin of the world you have taken upon you,  
have mercy upon us, the Great I AM.  
For holy, you meet us, yet lowly you greet us,  
the Lord in the highest, the Holy One.  
All glory to the Father, the Son and the Spirit,  
From ages everlasting, the Three in One.**

*The English Folk Song Mass—Malcolm Archer*

*The Collect*

Let us pray (*silence for reflection on the theme of the day*)

Everliving God, before the earth was formed,  
and even after it shall cease to be, you are God.  
Break into our short span of life  
and show us those things that are eternal,  
that we may serve your purpose in all we do;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you in unity with the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*Please be seated*

## THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

### **A Reading from the Prophecy of Zephaniah [1. 7, 12-18]**

Be silent before the Lord God!

For the day of the Lord is at hand;  
the Lord has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated his guests.  
At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,  
and I will punish the people who rest complacently on their dregs,  
those who say in their hearts,

‘The Lord will not do good, nor will he do harm.’

Their wealth shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste.  
Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them;  
though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them.

The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast;  
the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter, the warrior cries aloud there.  
That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish,  
a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness,  
a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities  
and against the lofty battlements.

I will bring such distress upon people that they shall walk like the blind;  
because they have sinned against the Lord, their blood shall be poured  
out like dust, and their flesh like dung.

Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of  
the Lord’s wrath;

in the fire of his passion the whole earth shall be consumed;  
for a full, a terrible end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Hear the word of the Lord.

**THANKS BE TO GOD**

Psalm is said: Left side, Right side - All together

### **Psalm 90. 1-6, 10-12**

Lord, you have been our refuge:

**from one generation to another.**

Before the mountains were born

or the earth and the world were brought to be:

**from eternity to eternity you are God.**

You turn us back into dust:

**saying ‘Return to dust, O children of Adam.’**

For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday passing:

**or like one watch of the night.**

You cut them short like a dream:

**like the fresh grass of the morning;**

In the morning it is green and flourishes:

**at evening it is withered and dried up.**

The days of our life are three score years and ten,  
or if we have strength, four score:

**the pride of our labours is but toil and sorrow,  
for it passes quickly away and we are gone.**

Who can know the power of your wrath:

**who can know your indignation like those that fear you?**

*Teach us so to number our days:*

*that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.*

### **A Reading from The First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians [5. 1-11]**

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Hear the word of the Lord,  
**thanks be to God.**

**Gradual Hymn:** AHB 520/TiS 599. Tune, Savannah or Nottingham.

- 1. Take my life, and let it be  
consecrated, Lord, to thee.  
Take my moments and my days,  
let them flow in ceaseless praise.**

2. **Take my hands, and let them move  
at the impulse of thy love.  
Take my feet, and let them be  
swift and beautiful for thee.**
3. **Take my voice, and let me sing  
always, only, for my King.  
Take my lips, and let them be  
filled with messages from thee.**
4. **Take my silver and my gold,  
nothing, Lord, would I withhold.  
Take my intellect, and use  
every power as thou shalt choose.**
5. **Take my will and make it thine;  
it shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is thine own;  
it shall be thy royal throne.**
6. **Take my love: my Lord, I pour  
at thy feet its treasure-store.  
Take myself, and I will be  
ever, only, all for thee.**

Frances Ridley Havergal 1836–79 alt.

The Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Matthew [25. 14-30]  
**Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

‘For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, “Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, “Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of

many things; enter into the joy of your master.” Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, “Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.” But his master replied, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

For the Gospel of the Lord,  
**praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

*A time for reflection.*

### *The Creed*

Let us affirm our faith and the faith of the Church.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father;  
from there he will come to judge  
the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ has promised that you will hear us when we ask in faith: receive the prayers we offer.

God of grace,  
**hear our prayer.**

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord.  
**And may light perpetual shine upon them.**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

**Offertory Hymn**—AHB 105/TiS 164. tune, THAILAND

- 1. The great love of God  
is revealed in the Son,  
who came to this earth  
to redeem every one.**
- 2. That love, like a stream  
flowing clear to the sea,  
makes clean every heart  
that from sin would be free.**
- 3. It binds the whole world,  
every barrier it breaks,  
the hills it lays low,  
and the mountains it shakes.**
- 4. It's yours, it is ours,  
O how lavishly giv'n!  
the pearl of great price,  
and the treasure of heav'n.**

Daniel Thambyrajah Niles 1908–70



*Offertory prayer:*

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power,  
the glory, the splendour, and the majesty;  
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours.

**All things come from you,  
and of your own do we give you.**

THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

**Notices**

Eternal God and Father,  
**by whose power we are created,  
and by whose love we are redeemed:  
Guide and strengthen us by your Spirit,  
that we may give ourselves to your service,  
and live this day in love to one another and to you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Concluding Hymn—TiS 675. tune, Shine, Jesus, Shine.

- 1. Lord, the light of your love is shining  
In the midst of the darkness shining.  
Jesus, Light of the World shine upon us;  
Set us free by the truth you now bring us;  
Shine on me; shine on me:**

***Chorus Shine Jesus shine;  
fill this land with the Father's glory.  
Blaze Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.  
Flow, river, flow;  
flood the nations with grace and mercy;  
Send forth your Word, Lord, and let there be light.***

- 2. Lord, I come to your awesome presence  
From the shadows into your radiance  
By the blood may I enter your brightness.  
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness  
Shine on me, shine on me.**

***Chorus***

**3. As we gaze on your kingly brightness  
So our faces display your likeness,  
Ever changing from glory to glory,  
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story.  
Shine on me, shine on me.**

**Chorus**

Graham Kendrick © 1987 Make Way Music

*The Grace*

**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.**

*Dismissal*

Go in the peace of Christ.  
**Thanks be to God.**

Text from *A Prayer Book for Australia* (Sydney: Broughton Books, 1995) © 1995, The Anglican Church of Australia Trusts Corporation. Holy Communion Second Order.  
The Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicised Edition, © copyright, 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, Used by permission. All rights reserved.  
Hymns from Together in Song. CCLI 637628.

To this man, God is not ‘good news’ because he is too obsessed with his own failure. He cannot see that all the other slaves are rewarded for their efforts, irrespective of whether they earned big profits or small. He has turned his own failure into a weapon. ‘This is your fault, God,’ he shouts, ‘not mine.’ He cannot recognize good news because he doesn’t actually know himself at all. In order to hear good news, you have to have some idea of what would constitute good news for your situation. But this slave is only looking for the downside of everything. He doesn’t want any good news, because he’s sure there will be a drawback in it somewhere.

The Thessalonians want God’s good news, though even they are slightly apprehensive about it. This good news is not something to take lightly. You have to be prepared for it, live your life in anticipation of it, stick together and help each other train for it.

Why should the ‘good news’ of the love of God be so alarming? Perhaps because few of us actually know how to be loved. We know how to be pampered, or to indulge ourselves, or to whine about being misunderstood. But to be loved with God’s total, consuming, transforming and utterly perceptive love? Are we ready for that?

Williams, J. (2004). *Lectionary Reflections: Year A* (p. 129). SPCK.

## *The Second Sunday Before Advent*

The word ‘gospel’ means ‘good news’, and Christians believe that, in Jesus Christ, the whole world is offered the good news of God’s love for them. But the New Testament also bears witness to the fact that not everyone receives God’s love as ‘good news’. Incredible as it may seem, some people look at Jesus and hate him and the God he represents. Some feel threatened, some feel bored, some hate the way he breaks their rules about God, and some simply do not recognize what is on offer. The passages that the lectionary gives us to reflect upon in these Sundays before Advent are all full of foreboding and warning. It is possible to reject the love of God, and so to reject your own life. It is possible to live in such a way that you do not recognize Life when it stands in front of you.

Zephaniah describes a people characterized by the word ‘complacent’ (v. 12). They believe that they have a good life because it is materially comfortable. They are well housed and well fed, and they believe that they can keep God at a safe distance. After all, their wealth has enabled them to keep all other uncomfortable things at bay so why not God too? It’s not that they don’t believe in God, it’s just that they think they have bought his neutrality—he won’t intervene, one way or another.

To them, God comes as a hostile and destructive army, taking away all their security and giving them only terror. There is no ‘good news’ for them, because the only good news they would recognize is no news. They don’t want to hear anything about God at all. Unfortunately, in God’s world, that is not an option.

The slave in Matthew’s parable is not quite that far gone. He knows the master quite well, but he fears and dislikes him. We have no idea what has led to this state of affairs between master and slave. Obviously, the master is a bit of a maverick. Not many masters would give their slaves quantities of money, and go off for an unspecified period of time, to an unknown destination, leaving no instructions. He doesn’t tell the slaves what they are expected to do with the property but, clearly, he knows them quite well, and they know him. They know that this is a test of some kind, and they approach it each in his own way.

The slave who is given one talent already believes that the master doesn’t think much of him. There may be a longer history to this than we are told, but it is obvious to him that the master trusts him less than the others, because he gives him less. And this slave is both afraid and resentful. His resentment comes bubbling out when the master finally returns, and the slave finds himself pouring out what he really thinks of the master. He knows he’s going to get into trouble, but he’s determined to have his say first.

The master’s response is interesting. He recognizes the slave’s description of himself, but not why it led to that result. ‘If you’re so scared of me,’ the master says, ‘why didn’t you try harder to please me?’

And to this, the slave has no answer. He had decided, long ago, that nothing he did would please his master, and he has given up trying.

*(Continued on page 10)*

## The Second Sunday Before Advent

This parable gave ‘talent’ a new meaning, so common that we don’t realize how far we have domesticated a warning about more serious matters than developing one’s personal potential and skill. In Jesus’ day a talent was a measure of weight, particularly of (a large sum of) money. Countless moralizing sermons have applied the parable to what we now mean by ‘talents’; the word, and the interpretation, have stuck.

Nor is it a bad lesson to learn at that level (though the normal reading comes unglued at the climax of the story, where the person with ten talents is given one more). But let us not trivialize Jesus’ teaching. Here we are in the middle of Matthew 25, itself located within the climactic section 23–25, immediately preceding the huge and dark events of the next two chapters. What is at stake is rather more serious than whether Jack and Jill get Bs instead of Cs in their Physics GCSEs.

The original setting is Jesus’ warning, not of a far-off event at his ‘return’, but of YHWH’S coming at last to Israel to seek the fruit from the vineyard planted so long ago. ‘YHWH will not do good, neither will he do harm,’ they said in Zephaniah’s day; the third servant, despite having a rather more pessimistic view of his master, proved equally, and culpably, ineffectual. The God who promised to search Jerusalem with lamps will penetrate to the heart of the matter. The slave’s commission has gone unfulfilled.

Jesus’ warning is clear: unless Israel makes good and swift use of her privilege and responsibility as God’s people, chosen for the sake of the world, the privilege will at last be withdrawn. Jesus stands in the line of the great prophets, looking for justice and discovering corruption, looking for virtue and discovering vice—and warning God’s people that, though they will plant vineyards and not share the crop, in the moral sense they will most certainly reap what they sow.

If we are to apply these terrible warnings authentically to subsequent generations, we must begin with the gospel warning to the human race as a whole. Called to be God’s wise stewards over creation, what has the human race to show for its commission? Works of beauty and truth, yes. Works of creativity and justice, to be sure. But also plenty of talents buried in the ground, including (alas) by Christians. Called to be human, we prefer other, less demanding, destinies. We may just get them.

Paul, looking towards the same future, issues a bracing challenge in terms of night and day: you must live as day people, even though others think it’s still night. ‘Peace and security’ mumbles the dozy world, turning over in bed; it was a slogan in the early Roman Empire, celebrating Augustus’s great but deeply ambiguous achievement. Slogans, though, will not prevent sudden convulsions. Wake up, then, and be ready! Another Pauline mixed metaphor: off with the nightshirt, on with the armour.